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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: U.S. SCIENCE FELLOW PUTS HIS MARK ON EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT AND OIL SPILL PREVENTION AND RECOVERY IN NIGERIA

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¶1. (U) Summary: 2009 U.S. Science Fellow and Environmental Protection Agency's Federal on Scene Coordinator, Michael Solecki, over a three-month period (January - April, 2009) helped the Nigerian Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), the Nigerian Oil Spills Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA), and the Federal University of Technology (FUT) in Minna, Niger State institute systemic and positive changes that will shape their performance for years to come. The U.S. collaboration with NOSDRA, NEMA, and FUT advanced the U.S. Mission's objective of partnering with the Government of Nigeria and others in protecting the Nigerian environment and encouraging sustainable economic development. Mike Solecki's dedication and hard work, eagerness and flexibility to adjust to changing demands and priorities of the agencies he worked with, positive attitude and friendly disposition, left a lasting and positive impression of the U.S. with current and future leaders in the three Nigerian institutions he worked with. End Summary.

The Nigerian Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency

¶2. (U) After 50 years of oil production and neglect, Nigeria's oil-producing Niger Delta region suffers from severe oil pollution and degradation as a result of deteriorating oil infrastructure and frequent illegal pipeline tampering (bunkering). NOSDRA, the Nigerian agency entrusted with oil spill prevention and recovery, has very little capacity to respond to these challenges. To help the agency respond more effectively to oil spills, the Mission arranged for the U.S. Science Fellow to provide three weeks of practical training in oil spills detection and clean-up and restoration of affected areas to 62 Environmental Officers from NOSDRA. Although most of these officers had backgrounds in chemistry or engineering none had training in practical oil spills detection and recovery methods and techniques. The U.S.-provided training enabled these environmental officers to be certified as emergency responders for oil spill recovery operations and restoration of affected areas. The U.S. Science Fellow also trained the agency's senior management in setting up and operationalizing a national incident command system for oil spills and their recovery. According to Dr. Bamidele Ajakaiye, Director General and Chief Executive Officer of NOSDRA, the U.S.-sponsored capacity training program will help enable his agency to set up such a system to monitor and respond to oil spills throughout the country.

Nigerian Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)

¶3. (U) At the Nigerian National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), the U.S. Science Fellow provided three weeks of training on disaster

response management for 89 emergency responders drawn from across the country. He also provided a three-day course on incident management systems for the agency's leadership, and designed, trained and oversaw a mass casualty exercise employing a simulated aircraft crash, which involved over 500 participants from 28 agencies and private airlines. This first-ever national exercise increased cohesion and performance among emergency responders and was a major news item in the country's media. The Science Fellow also assisted the Mission in designing a Voluntary Visitors Program for the leadership of NEMA to learn from U.S. experience on emergency management. (Note: The NEMA delegation headed by the Director General returned on May 30 from a successful VV tour with visits to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) headquarters in Washington, DC and the emergency management centers of the cities of Chicago and New Orleans on May 30. End Note).

¶4. (U) Science Fellow Solecki also gave a major lecture on climate change and adaptation strategies to over 300 students and faculty at the Federal University of Technology (FUT) in Minna (Niger State) and reviewed and provided comments to strengthen the university's Disaster Risk Reduction curriculum. Based on this engagement, the university is planning to offer a course in disaster management starting next academic year. With assistance from the Mission's Public Affairs Office, Solecki was interviewed on Nigeria's national radio on oil spill detection and recovery strategies with community support, bringing the message and U.S. support on environmental protection to a nationwide audience.

¶5. (U) Comments: Thanks to a dedicated and flexible Science Fellow, the Mission was able to introduce positive and systemic changes into Nigeria's emergency preparedness and disaster response capabilities, boost the country's ability to prevent oil spills and mitigate their environmental impact, and raise awareness on climate change and adaptation strategies, while at the same time fostering closer relations with key agencies, institutions, and the public. The

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Mission has requested a Science Fellow for 2010 to build on these achievements and reach out to other Nigerian entities. End Comment.

¶6. Consulate Lagos has cleared on this cable.

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